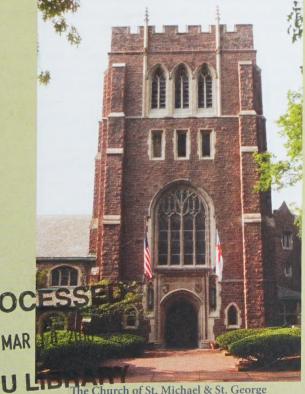
# The SPRING A.D. 2016 Anglican Digest

VOL. 58 NO. 1



The Church of St. Michael & St. George St. Louis, Missouri Member of the Parish Partner Plan

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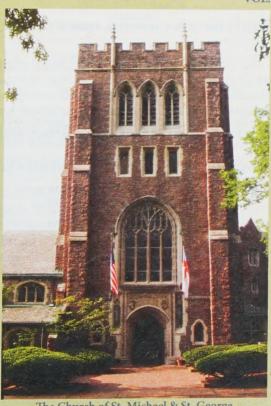
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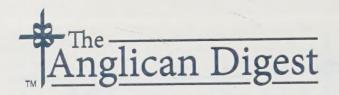
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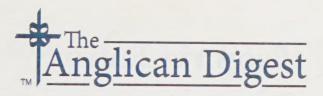
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### FROM THE EDITORS

The theme of this issue of *The Anglican Digest* is the problem of evil and suffering – that is, reconciling the existence of evil, pain, and suffering with the existence of a good, loving, and benevolent God. In addition to a number of new authors, we have chosen to re-publish two articles from past issues of the *Digest*. We hope that the words offered here will inspire, strengthen, and aid our readers as we observe Lent and Holy Week, and look forward to Easter.

With this issue, we will begin recognizing the members of our Parish Partner Plan by printing photographs of their churches on our covers. Although it will take us quite some time to get through all of them, we see it as a way to thank the members of these parishes for their support of *TAD* over the years, as well as give our readers a concrete notion of their connection with people across the country and around the world.

The cover photographs for this issue are of The Church of St. Michael and St. George, in St. Louis, Missouri; you can see more photos, and learn more about the parish, from their website: csmsg.org, and their facebook page: facebook.com/csmsg. Please visit our website to learn more about the Parish Partner Plan: anglicandigest.org/parish-partnership-plan/.

# TABLE of CONTENTS

- 7 To Whom Else Could We Go?
- 12 STRIVE TO ENTER THAT REST
- 16 THE MEANING OF HIROSHIMA
- 18 A WORD AT THE END OF WORDS
- 21 DEATH IS THE ENEMY OF GOD
- 37 My Son's Autism Is Making Me Holy
- 42 HAVE FAITH?
- 45 GRIEF IS THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE
- 50 PAIN, SUFFERING, AND DEATH
- 55 A LUCKY BREAK

'There cannot be a God of love,' men say, 'because if there was, and he looked upon the world, his heart would break.' The Church points to the cross and says, 'It did break.' 'It's God who made the world,' men say. 'It's he who should bear the load.' The Church points to the cross and says, 'He did bear it.'

— William Temple

98th Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-1944)

### TO WHOM ELSE COULD WE GO?

THE REV. KATIE SILCOX ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF TORONTO

think Jesus' disciples were quite right when they said, "this teaching is difficult, who can accept it?" What teaching are the disciples referring to? Well, they're referring to Jesus' teaching just here: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

Not long ago, our parish had an instructed liturgy service where we learned that our liturgy is essentially about hearing, learning, but ultimately giving ourselves over to concrete act of Jesus Christ's coming amongst us in the flesh. And one of the things we discussed was how exactly this notion of 'in the flesh' has been understood and encapsulated in our teaching about the Eucharist and the Scriptures over the course of Israel's and the Church's history.

This week, Simon Peter's answer to Jesus' question to those disciples who stop following on account of this tough teaching set a slightly different emphasis for us: Jesus says, "I know there are some among you who do not believe, and for this reason no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father." This apparently causes some who had been following Jesus to stop doing so. And so Jesus turns to Simon Peter and says, "do you also wish to leave?" And Simon Peter replies, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to

believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Jesus Christ, in full humanity, has come amongst these people so that they might find eternal life in him. But of course for those disciples following - as for the Israelites in the desert - these are words that come from flesh and blood, from a man, who, yes, has done some amazing things, supposedly, as with Moses, by the power of God. But how can words feed the wandering, starving, thirsting Israelites? How can a loaf and a few fish feed five thousand? How can Joseph and Mary's son give eternal life to those who follow him? How can a man of flesh give life to others already born into the world?

And perhaps because of a lack of logical coherence, or of desire not to appear a little mentally off, or for political or financial reasons, or maybe just out of laziness or indifference,

or maybe even out of fear of maltreatment, some followers take off. The words, "I know there are some amongst you who don't believe and not all of you will come to me," seem to be the release for these folks, mitigating a potentially mounting tension that came with following Jesus; halting the need to face into the potential demands placed on their lives, or at the least, the questions it raised about how they were living. Who knows why.

But Simon Peter's answer to Jesus' query, "do you also wish to leave?" is the most critical: "Lord, to whom else could we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." Why is this the most critical question? Because it presses us to examine a key question: what is the difference between those like Peter, who will become a part of the Church,

and those who fall away? The difference is this: despite their failures, despite their brokenness, despite their intellectual capacities or lack thereof, despite their lack of transformation, those who follow do not look to themselves, to their own success or transformation or conquests to determine if they should continue to follow. Rather like Peter, those who ask, 'to whom else could we go,' simply continued to follow after Jesus.

And this pattern of faithfulness is found throughout the Scriptures: despite Job's horrific dark night of the soul, despite Sarah and Abraham's barrenness, despite Peter's terrified denial of Jesus three times, despite Paul's thorn, despite Matthias' lack of preparation when added to the eleven, despite the Ethiopian's lack of formal catechetical training, despite Jonah's rage at those who didn't rightly believe in God, they each

simply continued to seek and follow God.

If they have been saved, you see, it is not by their success in following. Rather, it is a matter of grace received all the way down, as they follow. For where else could they go? The Israelites sometimes, like the Nations, called upon personal gods and erected high places to them, but the gods could not save them. We call upon science, and while it provides brilliant functional means by which to help heal our bodies and sometimes our minds, it does not make us, or give us purpose, or grant us eternal, transfigured life.

Why is it that those few followed? What about them turned them into followers who persevere to the end? To be honest, I haven't the faintest clue. I think it's rather arrogant and unscriptural to assume one could derive a system that would mark

or create true followers, or ensure that only the faithful were a part of my church, so that no one could be contaminated by the 'unfaithful.' I raise these things because I think we as the Church spend too much time thinking about how we can get people to follow God. We end up trying to systematize a means of getting people to follow, or create special programs, or constantly change our worship or music in order to attract people, rather than trusting that God works in and through the particularities of people's lives such that our own ways don't have to be constantly changing to 'bring people in.' A wise friend of mine said it well: grace "can neither be anticipated or prepared for ... When it happens, it can only be received as a gift."

I think the better question by which to guide our faith and teaching is precisely Simon Peter's own: "to whom else

could we go?" Why? Because it drives at a more fundamental question: who is this Iesus who claims to be one with God, creator and preserver of all things? That is, if I believe the very life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has concretely changed the world in overcoming sin and death, that he is one with God the creator and preserver of all things; and if I believe that this concrete event of his life. death, and resurrection has revealed the love of God for me in particular; then all my particular proclivities, struggles, desires, and relationships ... well, to whom else can I look to understand how to engage these things with a heart opened and set free by grace from the bondage of fear and anxiety, the festering of sin?

As a child, I was intense, driven, obsessive, focused on examining and practicing religions — Buddhism,

Hinduism, Judaism — and socio-political ideologies — Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Communism, Nazism, militarism - cutting and pasting together social structures that could create flourishing human societies. I was withdrawn, because of course this was an internal work awaiting perfection in order that it could be made manifest. As I grew up, I had to begin to grapple with the demands of an external world. Just back in contact with a childhood friend. equally gifted, someone with whom I thought I might be able to share the fantastic creative delights I'd conjured, he ended his life.

When someone you know ends his own life, there is nothing rational, nothing coherent about it. Sure, science can explain how he died: depression, biochemical imbalances, neurological malfunction, loss of hope, physical pain, exhaustion, carbon monoxide poisoning the system, a closed garage. Science can do its best to explain why, too. But for me, my friend taking his own life made me ask: if we all suffer, if I cannot create a flourishing community, if so many of these idealized efforts lead to things like Nazi war camps and the suicide of my friend, what is the point of life, of time, of a whole history of these things? If, no matter what ideology, or religion I follow, my mere inclination to action is fallible, then why bother with this life? To whom should I go to ask the question of life's value and meaning?

With a mind still reeling, I entered the Church. I have been following Jesus since. Let me say this in case anyone here imagines following will provide a cure or a crutch for all that ails: while following, I have experienced several dark nights of the soul that would rival Job's own. To follow Je-

sus is not to find a 'cure' for struggle or even for suffering. Believing this to be true is, I think, one of the reasons people sometimes give up. Why do I still struggle, they ask? Where is my cure, where is my treatment? Why is my life, my world, my relationship, still so dark and stormy? Why is the Church shrinking and why are there so many ignorant, cruel, evil jerks in it? Where is my husband, my wife, my money, my sanity, my companionship, my relief? To whom should I go to answer this? Or should I stop asking and leave this church, this relationship, even this life? But where would I go: "for neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation," not even my own attempts to shape it, "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." For our Lord Jesus

Christ suffered death and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, he descended even into Hell — for there is no place God will not seek out his lost, broken-hearted, shattered little sheep, wandering thirsty and hungry, bleating sometimes softly out of anguish, sometimes brashly out of arrogance masking fear. Who else can shepherd the sheep? Only wolves.

Following, especially with others in the Church, is actually a concrete place in time (because it is made up of extended relationships), where we give and receive encouragement and support, where in Christ, we gain the moments of strength in order to bear others' burdens, where we receive a provision of daily bread, giving the nourishment we need for a particular day. This is the place where love is given and received because it is here we encounter the fruit of Christ's victory

for us in the Church: where the risen Lord comes among us and indwells, not in some abstract way, but through others, according to the particularities of our own experiences. The gift of God in the flesh and blood of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is not confined by the limitations of our imagination, or our science, or even our derivation of his laws to our own purposes. Rather, day-by-day, God gives us our daily bread because he can. Because he alone has made all things and nourishes all things with the food needed for their very particular and unique purposes. Can you trust this? That is for you to decide. But there is only one way to know the one who makes this claim: follow him. Follow him. Follow him.

### STRIVE TO ENTER THAT REST, ON PS 95[94]

[Originally at Covenant on October 24, 2014]

THE REV. MATTHEW S.C. OLVER NASHOTAH HOUSE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

St. Benedict's liturgical scheme for the Daily Office had a profound impact on the everdeveloping pattern of prayer throughout the Western Church. While the claim that Anglican liturgy is "Benedictine" is historically dubious (since Cranmer's primary influence was the Sarum rite of the Western office, which in turn reflected Benedictine. Roman, Gallican, and a whole host of other influences), it is true that Cranmer's vision of a "nation-as-monastery" has a certain Benedictine ring to it. In particular, the combination of Mass, Office, and private devotion — which Martin Thornton has so eloquently described in his classic works

English Spirituality (a true gem) and Pastoral Theology (all priests and seminarians who have not read: attend!) — may be integrated into the life of any Christian of any state, as a pattern of life and means of grace.

Cranmer's liturgical revision was at the same time incredibly radical yet completely recognizable to the tradition that preceded him (something much more difficult to say for the Holy Communion service from 1552 until the Scottish BCP). He pared the Office down to almost nothing beyond Scripture (save for the Gloria Patri, Te Deum, Creed, Preces, and Collects). And yet its structure, the centrality of Psalmody, the scriptural and traditional canticles, all bespeak the monastic and cathedral offices of which it is a direct descendent. Many agree it may be Cranmer's most brilliant piece of revision: the radicalism is directly proportional

to the need he sought to fill — namely, an office which didn't require hours of preparation, which could fulfill the spiritual needs of clergy and laity alike, and which placed the Scriptures at the intersection of corporate and private prayer.

One of the things Cranmer wisely retained is something we find in Chapter 9 of the The Rule of St. Benedict. There, St. Benedict directed how Vigils or the Night Office are to be said (in constructing Mattins/Morning Prayer, Cranmer drew from this office. along with Lauds and Prime). Whether in winter or in summer, the Benedictine office begins in the same way: a threefold repetition of "Lord, open thou our lips/And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise," followed by Psalm 95, which Anglicans the world over refer to under its Latin title, Venite (whether it is said with the Italian or Anglicana pronunciation is another matter). Al-

#### CONNECTING

though "Lord, open thou our lips" is only recited once in Cranmer's Mattins, Psalm 95 is retained.

One of the losses most lamentable in the American Prayer Book tradition, in addition to the disappearance of the Kyrie in the Office, was when they took up the scissors of Thomas Jefferson and excised verses 7b-11 from Psalm 95:

Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me,

proved me, and saw my works.

Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said,

*It is a people that do err in* their hearts.

for they have not known my ways.

Unto whom I sware in my wrath,

that they should not enter into my rest.

From the very first American Prayer Book in 1789, the revisers replaced these verses with the following ones from Psalm 96, verses 9 and 13:

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth, and with righteousness to judge the world and the peoples with his truth.

Wonderfully, however, the 1979 BCP restored the end of verse 7 in the Rite II service ("Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!") and also provided the full psalm in Coverdale's translation on page 146 for optional use.

But why are these last verses of the Venite so critical?

The epistle to the Hebrews presents an exegetical sermon

on Psalm 95, in chapters three and four. The first chapter opens with a luminous description of the coming of Jesus Christ ("In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed as the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world"). Then, beginning at verse 5, it weaves together a host of direct Old Testament quotations, which the author reads allegorically to buttress the argument. "Therefore," chapter 2 begins, "we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." Jesus is an apostle, a great high priest (3:1) and, interestingly, "the builder of a house" (3:3). "We are his house," the sermon explains, "if we hold fast our confidence" (3:6). The warning from the Holy Spirit (3:7) at the end of Psalm 95 is quoted in its entirety in order that we might "take care...lest there be in any of you an evil and unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living

God" (3:12). The sermon is relentless and direct: "Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it" (4:1).

Thus, St. Benedict's instruction that this Psalm be recited daily reflects a tradition that clearly predated him. This tradition believed that one of the results of the unity of the vine called Israel with the ecclesial Body of Christ (into which every catechumen is grafted/baptized) is that there are temptations common to both. This is reflected in the demand made by the Divine Office that the Christian begin each day with a prayerful meditation on the profound similitude between Israel's rebellion and that which lurks deep in every heart.

We must "strive to enter" (4:11) the "Sabbath rest [that remains] for the people of God" (4:9) by true repentance (3:13-18), by seeking after the

divine gift of Faith (3:19-4:4), and by means of the Word of God (4:12), whom we encounter in sacred Scripture and the Sacraments, Our confidence and hope rests only on Jesus, for "He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness" (5:2). To pray Psalm 95 in earnest is to find ourselves united to the eternal victim who offers himself as our great high priest. Only there do we find life. And we find this life when, by grace, we choose holiness. If only "today, when you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

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### THE MEANING OF HIROSHIMA

[reprinted from the Transfiguration 1982 issue of TAD]

Guthrie Janssen, former NBC correspondent

Since 1945, the Feast of the Transfiguration on 6 August has also been recalled as the anniversary of dropping the first atomic bomb.

Dare we ask, "Why did God permit it?"

I believe that we can and must pose the question. Job did, though in different circumstanced. As Charles Williams has said, the Lord requires that His people shall demand an explanation from Him.

In the decades since I was a member of the first American party to enter Hiroshima after the bomb, I have had time to reflect on the answer to that

question. My conclusion is that, to understand Hiroshima, we have to take God and His word with utmost seriousness.

It was 3 September 1945, fewer than 30 days after the bomb - a sultry, drizzly, miserable day, just right for exploring hell. I was an NBC correspondent, and I teamed with a non-competitor, Stan Troutman of Acme (now UPI) Photos. That is how I happen to be the solitary figure in many of the earliest pictures of Hiroshima. My fatigue after a flight halfway around the world, the mucky air, the stench of 100,000 rubble-buried bodies, benumbed me. It was man's doing - but what was God up to?

I think we first have to dispense with numbers. There is a subtle perversity in Americans that leads us to glory in the very dimensions of our wickedness. We are a statis-

tical people. We scan the figures on rising crime while ignoring its victims. We tote up victories by body counts. And our military told me that the atomic bomb just gives a bigger bang for the buck. At the same time, I have heard pacifists dwell on the enormity of war as if it were the only sin worth mentioning. We lust after grandiose causes, forgetting that God pretty much declines to quantify sin, but rather seeks the humble and contrite heart.

Having said that, I believe we can say that God permitted Hiroshima in order to show us what we are really like, and to humble us for our repentance. He told us plainly in Psalm 81:12, "I gave them up to their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."

Well, is not that what it means to be a man? No. It is our condemnation. It is what it means to be separated from God. Read on: "Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries." The truth is that there is more power in faith, fear of God, repentance, and prayer than in all the nuclear weapons put together. That is the message of Hiroshima.

### A WORD AT THE END OF WORDS

THE REV. DR. KARA N. SLADE DUKE UNIVERSITY

At the Maundy Thursday liturgy, we stand at the end of the world, looking toward the turning point of history; on Good Friday, we arrive at that place. This day, this hour, is the pivot of the universe, the still point around which everything is turned upside-down: our Judge is judged in our place; our prophet, priest, and King is lifted up from the earth, and he is drawing the whole world to himself; the God who spoke the word of creation speaks one decisive word to sin, death, and the devil: "No."

To be frank, it's a word that leaves me without many words of my own. In theory, I could pontificate all day about Jesus' work on the Cross for us and the significance of the Atonement — it's one of my specialties as a theologian, so you'd think I might have a lot to say. However, one thing I've learned in all my thinking, reading, and writing is this: the Word that God speaks today is the end of all our words. This is a time for silence and stillness, not for speech.

Each year, as I prepare to preach on Good Friday, I'm very much reminded of "Burnt Norton," the first of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, in which he writes,

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless; Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is, But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity, Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,

Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point, There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where. And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time. The inner freedom from the practical desire, The release from action and suffering, release from the inner And the outer compulsion, vet surrounded By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving, Elevation without motion, concentration Without elimination, both a new world And the old made explicit, understood In the completion of its partial ecstasy, The resolution of its partial horror. Yet the enchainment of past and future Woven in the weakness of the changing body, Protects mankind from heaven and damnation Which flesh cannot endure.

Perhaps what Eliot is gesturing towards here is none other than the Good News on this Good Friday – and yes, there is good news, because we know how the story ends. This end of the world is also the beginning of a new creation. This stillness reveals the source of all things in the mystery of the Triune God. And the "No" that echoes today in the desolate silence of our bare churches divides what has been from what will be. It wasn't God's first word to humanity, and it isn't his last either. In the meantime, we wait, but not as those without hope. Today, God says "No" to everything that separates us from him, but only because God also says "Yes" to everything that reconciles us to him.

And yet.

And yet, as we walk to the foot of the cross and kneel at this the end of all our speech, we find that we're not alone there. Near the end of the Johannine Passion narrative, we hear what seems to be an odd interruption to the flow of the story: "Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home."

Far from being an insignificant detail, this is an ineluctably crucial part of the work of atonement. Even as Jesus dies, the Church is born. The faith that we find at the foot of the Cross brings us together, where Christ gives us to each other as mothers and sons and brothers and sisters. On a God-forsaken hill outside the city gates, in a place where it might seem that all hope is gone, we are given a family that we didn't know we had and never expected to find.

Matthias Grunewald painted this scene in his altarpiece for the chapel at the monastery of St. Anthony at Isenheim. It's a painting that's been pivotal for my own faith, as it was for Karl Barth. In the center, of course, we see Christ on the cross; below him, we see Mary and John the beloved disciple and, in a move of artistic license, we see John the Baptist as well. Mary looks on in shock and adoration while the beloved disciple embraces her. Meanwhile, John the Baptist stands to one side and points to the one who reigns from the tree, as if to say: "He must increase, and I must decrease."

In the end, at the end of all our words, what we are and what we do as the Church is none other than this. We adore him and look to him, even as we hold on to each other in our grief.

## DEATH IS THE ENEMY OF GOD

Adapted from a homily given by the Rt. Rev. Edward L. Salmon

s I looked at the Gospel passage for today — the tenth chapter of the Gospel According to St. Luke a theme emerged. If you remember, that passage began by saying, "After these things, the Lord appointed 70 others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. And He said to them, 'The harvest is truly great, but the laborers are few. Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." I think, in order to get the full depth of that passage, we need to notice that it said "70 others," because the ninth chapter refers to the sending out of the 12, and then the sending out of the 70; the ninth chapter begins, "Then He called His disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick."

The passages from the ninth and tenth chapters of the Gospel According to St. Luke call all Christians to the Gospel message of healing and reconciliation by announcing that the Kingdom of God has come near you. In making that announcement, what it points to is the transforming Grace of God in Jesus Christ that has been unleashed in God's creation, to be present in the deepest tragedies and sorrows of life. God's purpose can be seen in the words of St. Paul when he says that "the whole creation groans in pain and travail together until now", And God's response to that is Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected.

I think it's very important, as we look at those two chapters, to understand the urgency of them. For instance, they begin both by saying, "Carry no bag, knapsack, money. Greet no-one on the way. Remain in the same house." 'Be focused.' That's an important message, I think, to the Church, because if there is any group with which I have been associated all these years that can become easily un-focused, it's the Church. Our focus is supposed to be on Jesus Christ and His saving power, and so the message is, 'This is of the utmost importance. Focus on proclaiming the Kingdom of God?

In that ninth chapter of Luke, Jesus is trying to say some very important things to His disciples, things they struggle to see because they are on the front end of the crucifixion and resurrection. And then-later, when the twelve disciples come back and report to

Jesus, they withdraw to a place where Jesus can pray, and they are followed by the crowds. If you remember the feeding of the five thousand: the disciples tell Jesus that the crowds need to be sent away; instead, he tells them to feed the people, and they respond by saying, 'oh, we've only got five barley loaves and two fishes.' In this feeding of the crowd we see the expanding power of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Then, after that miracle in chapter nine, Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?", and they reply, 'some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, others say one of the prophets.' And then He asked the leading question, "Who do you say that I am?" Of course everybody could predict that Simon Peter would answer that question — that's just his persona - and Peter says, "The Christ of God." And then there's that remarkable response: "Tell no one." Don't tell anybody.

I can remember saying to a congregation, some years ago: if you're confused about Jesus, don't ask anybody to come to church until you get it straight. That, in effect, is what Jesus is saying to the disciples here: don't tell anybody. The crucifixion and resurrection have not transpired yet, and so it is going to look like magic, it's going to look like something that it's not. And so he says to them, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and raised on the third day." No cross, no resurrection, no Gospel, no transformation, no salvation. That's what Jesus is trying to say to His disciples.

The most important thing in chapter nine, when Jesus is talking to his disciples, is to begin to get clear about who he is, as the Son of God. And in the 44<sup>th</sup> verse of that chapter, it says, "Let these words

sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men." It is vitally important that we know who we are, what we are, and what we are about — and that is the announcement that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Kingdom of God, has come near to you.

I'd like to suggest to you, as we are required to be sent out, as the 70 were sent out, that this is probably one of the most pregnant times for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be heard in my lifetime. Let me tell you why I think that's the case: We are in a traumatic time, when the foundations of the culture in which we live have been shaken, the complacency of this culture has been shaken.

Some time ago, I was on a plane, reading the *Financial Times*, and came across an article by Joe Quinlan in which he said there are five painful lessons that our country is

learning; I just want to point to two of them. First: Like it or not, we are all connected. We haven't really believed that in years, have we? But think about Alan Greenspan. He is a sharp man, yet he admitted that he'd made a mistake: he had no idea that people who were leaders in the financial industry would not have the well-being of their shareholders at heart. Really?! Has he never heard of mammon? Or sin? But, you see, because we're all connected, when people do things they ought not to do, it's not just personal. In that same newspaper, there was an article about Washington Mutual, and one of the women who was formerly an officer there was testifying that she had been required to approve loans that should not have been approved, sometimes when she couldn't even verify that the parties existed. She described what had been going on there as "I.B.G. and Y.B.G." meaning that, by the time anybody figured it out, 'I'll be gone and you'll be gone.' You see, think we're not connected, but the Gospel understands us *profoundly* connected.

Second: Confidence is a fragile commodity. Of course it is, if it's worldly confidence! If your confidence rests on the stock market always going up, or money always producing the kind of security that we need, or everything working like we think it ought to work, you may have all the confidence in the world, but that won't stop it all crashing down around your ears. But the confidence of the Gospel rests upon Jesus Christ, and that confidence cannot be shaken, because Jesus Christ is with us in the most profound adversity.

I also read an article by David Brooks in which he made a comment about Rick Warren's book, <u>The Purpose-Driven</u>

Life. Brooks mentioned that the first sentence in the book is, "It's not about you", then went on to say that that was a sign that the age of expressive individualism was coming to an end. What he meant by 'expressive individualism' is a belief that 'I am the truth, I am the one who decides what's right, I can believe what I want to believe, and you can believe what you want to believe, and it doesn't matter; the individual is supreme and sits on the throne'. Now, we know that belief is wrong — we know that God is supreme and sits on the throne — but our world today is reaping the fruits of that kind of selfish individualism. And the world is beginning to understand what the Gospel has always said: that behavior has consequences. So I believe that this is absolutely the most important time for Christians to be articulate about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that the Kingdom of God has come near to us.

The Christian world-view is that we live in a fallen universe. We believe that God created us with free will, with autonomy. But at the heart of the will is the location of evil - and that is where the distortion of creation comes. The creation is distorted, and thus God allows, but he does not will, evil. The cross is an example: that God allowed the crucifixion — in a sense, even willed the crucifixion. in terms of providence — and in doing so transformed evil. God doesn't will evil, but the Gospels teach us that Jesus Christ comes into the world in order to restore and transform creation, and to point to the Kingdom that is to come.

Some weeks ago, I was listening to the news and heard that a young deputy in East St. Louis, only in his twenties, had been killed in a wreck. There were all kinds of people who were testifying about what a wonderful man he had

been, talking about how active he had been in his church and so on. One of his friends said, "You know, God wanted him home", and I thought, "No. God didn't want him home." Death is the enemy of God. In this world, all kinds of things happen, and we can count on God being there with us through them - but God didn't want him home. But when those terrible things happen, God will redeem, in his providence, to see that His Will will not be broken.

So we as Christians have a world-view that says 'we live in a fallen universe.' Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in the concentration camp, when asked the question, "Where is God?" would say, "Right here." Right here. That's what the cross of Jesus Christ means.

Some time ago, there was a wonderful article in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that I cut out and saved because I

thought it pointed to something about what this Gospel Presence means in the world. There are all kinds of examples of it throughout the Church, in ministries large and small, that go out into a broken world in order to transform it. But in the Post was this marvelous picture of a German Shepherd's face, sleeping on the floor, and a young child, 16 years old, with his head against another dog's head, and the caption said, "Juvenile offenders train dogs, and in exchange learn the power of patience, praise, respect, and other tools that they will need to turn their lives around." The article began by saying, "Both the teen and the dog beside him were very close to dying young." That's this fallen world we live in. "The dog, a hound peppered with flecks of German Shepherd fur, had been abandoned as a puppy on an ailing street in St. Louis where homeless canines routinely scavenge for food and sleep in

GATHERING

dank basements of collapsing houses. And the teen: he was 4 when his mother was murdered, his father was already in prison for violent crime. Left to an unstable network of relatives, he relied on himself to survive a world driven by meth, heroin, drug dealing, and stealing. He had a short temper. Friends died of overdoses in front of him." This article was about a ministry that takes these young people from the juvenile detention centers and teaches them to train formerly stray dogs so that the

dogs can be saved — and in doing that, the young people are saved themselves. This is just one of the ways that the Presence of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed to us in this broken creation.

What an exciting time to be disciples, to be the ones that Jesus has sent out, to "Heal the sick, and go out and declare that the Kingdom of God is among you." And for that, I think we can all say 'Thanks be to God.'

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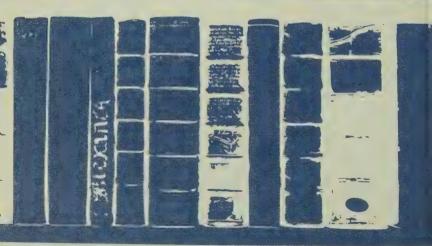
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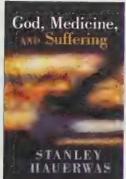
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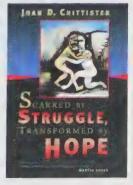
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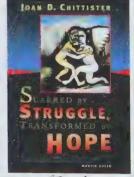
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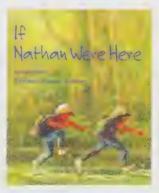
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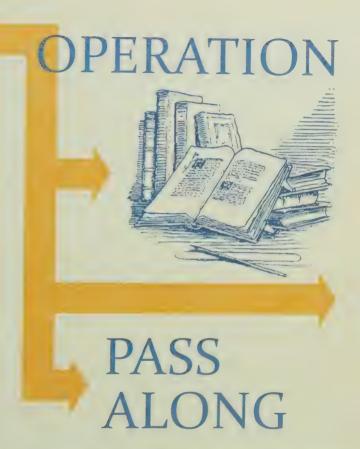
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### MY SON'S AUTISM IS MAKING ME HOLY (and I hate it)

[Originally published on the Covenant blog by "The Living Church"; re-published with permission]

THE REV. JONATHAN MITCHICAN RECTOR, CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER, DREXEL HILL, PA

y son Langston was born in 2008. "He's perfect," said the parish secretary. She had been in the waiting room, hoping to steal a glimpse of the newborn baby boy. She said it, and I believed it. Not in the theological sense, of course. I knew he was born a sinner like the rest of us. But when I looked at my baby son for the first time, and heard him coo, and felt him squirm, all I could do was praise God and sing Johnny Cash songs into his little ears, allowing myself to daydream about the doctor or lawyer or rock star that he might become one day.

This is the thing that nobody gets about parents of autistic children: for the first eighteen months, we thought we had the perfect child. There were no signs of looming disaster, no indications that this child's life and ours were about to be turned upside down. Langston developed normally in the beginning. He hit all his marks. He even knew a fair number of words, more than many of his peers of the same age.

And then, suddenly, it stopped. The words went away. The other behaviors typical for babies, like mouthing objects and babbling, did not. He fixated on certain objects, but he did not play like other children. He laughed and smiled, but he could not look us in the eye when we spoke to him.

My wife and I were new parents. We had grown up in small families. We did not know the first thing about

how typical children develop. But as we saw the children in Langston's playgroup changing while he stayed the same, we knew that something was wrong. At first, we tried to chalk it up to something else. Perhaps he had not yet learned to talk because he was so rambunctious. Perhaps it was simply a heavy case of ADHD. Maybe he just needed some mild therapies to release his full potential. All of these ideas floated through our heads, but by the time he was two years old, and the fateful day came when he had his appointment to be diagnosed, we knew that we had been comforting ourselves lies. Our child was not like other kids. He was never going to be like other kids. He is autistic. That is not the name of a chronic condition he suffers with; it is a statement of truth about who he is.

Autism is a disorder that a lot of people have heard of but

few people understand. It is classified as a neurological disorder but, truth be told, it is a collection of characteristics more than it is a single thing. Autistic people have great difficulty with communication. They often have heightened sensitivity about movement and about how they are touched. It is a spectrum disorder, which means that the way it manifests in people is all over the map. There are some autistic people whom you might never realize are autistic if you did not know. With others, like my son, it is quite obvious. No one knows what causes autism. nor how to cure it. Some therapies have been proven helpful over time, but they do not change the way autistic people understand the world. At best, they make it possible for an autistic person to navigate in a world that has been set up for people who think and act radically differently than they do.

Langston's autism is a burden for him and an albatross for my wife and I as his parents. Our lives are a constantly rotating series of crises, from dealing with spitting and aggressive behaviors, to spending thousands of dollars and man-hours trying to remodel his room in such a way that he can no longer chew on the woodwork and swallow lead paint. Our lives center around my son's autism. It is the pinion that spins our gears, the compass that keeps us ever pointing away from ourselves and towards some unknown horizon.

Parenting a child with severe special needs is making me holy. It is forcing me out of the self-centered, personal -desire-driven life that I had planned for myself; it is moving me instead into a life of service and humility. And I hate it.

On the day we were given

the diagnosis, I broke into a thousand pieces. It was not like we were not expecting it, but when the doctor said the words, "Your son has autism," any last shred of denial slipped away and I could feel the darkness of the rest of our lives settling in. He was not going to grow out of this. We could not save him from it. Our hopes and dreams for him would likely not come to fruition. Our hopes and dreams for our own lives and for our future would have to change. We would always have this to face. There would be no escape.

After we got home from the doctor's office, we were too tired and depressed to make dinner. We ordered take-out from a local Mexican place, and I volunteered to pick it up. It was December, and already it was cold like winter. On the way back home, O Come, O Come Emmanuel came on the radio. I pulled over to the

side of the road, unable to see through my tears.
O come, O come Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That stood in lonely exile
here,

Until the Son of God appear.

"Please God," I said out loud.

"Please, I need it to be true. I've believed it to be true before, but now I need it to be

true."

Jesus carried us through that winter He held me when I felt like I was going to fall and just keep falling. His Word, his promise, is the one thing that has kept me going since that moment. It is the one thing that has filled me with hope for what the horizon might look like. If we live in a world that is nothing more than chance chemical reactions, then my son's life is meaningless, as are our sacrifices for him. However, if we live in a world that is fallen but created good, a world in which evil has come to reign even in our bones but in which evil shall never have the last word, then my son's life, his eternal worth, has been bought and paid for by the blood of his savior.

Talking about all of this with people who have never experienced anything like it is difficult. People ask me how Langston is doing, and there is always an unspoken question behind the question: "Is he getting better? Is it ok?"

The answer to both of those questions is no. He is not getting better, and it is not ok, but that is not because my son's existence is totally void of good things or because I derive no joy from being his father. My son is still beautiful. He still makes me smile when he laughs. He has some qualities that I wish I had. He is completely unselfconscious and is entirely uninterested in what he owns or does not own. He is cuddly and silly, and when I look at him in

his lack of pretentiousness, I often think that he has the advantage: there is so little for him that might get in the way of his relationship with God. My son says very few words and even fewer phrases, but the other day, he spontaneously said to me, "I want Jesus." It was a prompt that he had memorized because he wanted me to sing Jesus Loves Me to him, but I still think it was an indication that faith is alive in him. Faith is not an intellectual exercise. As a Catholic Christian, I take comfort in knowing that the Lord is administering grace to my son through the sacraments. Bread, wine, and water put all of us on equal footing in the Kingdom of God.

We live in a society that places value on people based on their abilities, based on how smart they are or what they are able to achieve physically, based on their capacity to spend and to consume. My

son does not have value under that metric. He is a non-person in our society. But he is not a non-person in the eyes of God. He is broken, as we all are, but God has put his name on him. When the Father looks upon my son, he sees his own Son who was united with Langston forever on the day of his baptism. Langston's value is incalculable in human terms. He bears the very image of God.

Priests are called to be points of contact between God and the suffering world. Their hands stretched out to heal with soothing touch men's feverish souls, their hearts consecrated in the havens of refuge for the weary and fainting, must alike be pierced.

Written by the Rt. Rev.
 Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar, on the flyleaf of his Bible

#### HAVE FAITH?

The Rev. J. Wesley Evans Priest in Charge, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Sherman, TX

eing told to have faith in the midst of suffering can seem at first like a trite pleasantry. Even worse, it can be dismissive. I know I've used it before as verbal filler when I don't know what to say; though I genuinely desired to say something helpful, it's really just well-intentioned verbal filler. The phrase can be used with an inexactness that allows a brushing over of deeper questions, and I believe it's this vagueness of meaning that causes some to view it as devoid of meaning.

In spite of this reputation as a vague sentimentality, telling someone to have faith in the midst of suffering should be seen as a core and meaningful part of the Bible's response to suffering. God's command to have faith in him should

be a source of strength and comfort, but must be seen in the rich context of Scripture. Having faith is, in that context, a defiance in the face of evil, pain, and suffering. One particular example is the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness. In several ways their experience provides us with insight into surviving our own wilderness.

It was not long after their miraculous deliverance that the Israelites began to complain against Moses and Aaron, even to accuse them of nefarious motives. (Ex 16:1-3) "You," they said, "have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." They even believed things had been better for them under Egyptian slavery when they "sat by the fleshpots" and had their "fill of bread". They had, as the psalmist would later say, forgotten God and all the miracles he had done. (Ps 78:11)

Having faith in the wilderness was grounded in remembering, and Israel had a remembering problem.

I imagine, if we traveled back in time and asked them how they escaped Egypt, they could have accurately recalled the historical events - but when God commands his people to remember, or accuses them of forgetting, he is not speaking of mere mental recollection. His command to remember his ordinances (Num 15:39-40) was an injunction to obey them. His command to remember their own slavery in Egypt also implied a command to act in caring for the orphan, widow, and immigrant. (Deut 24:17-22) In the wilderness, it's not that we forget the existence of God, it's that our recollection has not resulted in acting. Our remembrance has not become part of who we are.

Start with recollection. Think about the times God has giv-

en you an unexpected blessing, when you may have experienced a deliverance, or when you felt God's presence in the midst of trying times. After recalling these times, open yourself in prayer to God, praising him for his actions in your life. Though mere recollection is not the end of remembering, it is the beginning. Looking back to the past provides a model for God's grace in the future. That is the purpose of recollection: an active remembrance that trains us to believe and trust in the God who acts.

This type of active remembering results in a present trust for God's provision. Though Israel railed against God, he acted in mercy by providing for them food from Heaven. (Ex 16:4-12) God used this provision as a test of faith, providing only enough for each day, and twice as much in preparation for the Sabbath.

Trusting God in the present is a daily, if not hourly, struggle. Yet this daily reliance on his provision is the epitome of faith. It is easy to have faith when life is going well and God's grace feels constant, but the faith that is valuable is the faith that has been tried and tested in the wilderness. This faith is often built one day at a time, as God provides just enough for each step, and asks us to trust him for the next.

Being lost in the wilderness is an opportunity for faith to grow and shine. Our path to Easter is only by the road of Lent. I know faith not when I see it in the life of the healthy and wealthy, but when I see it in the struggles of the poor, sick, and suffering. Too often the privileged of the western world use suffering as an argument against God when the very people suffering use their lives as a testimony to his provision!

When God gives daily blessings, we must then also learn to recognize them. When the food from Heaven fell, Israel responded not in thanksgiving but in confusion. (Ex 16:13-15) Their response as they looked at God's blessing and asked, "what is it?", showed an inability to recognize God's grace in their lives. Moses' response was direct and a little chastising: "this is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat." This is the blessing for which you cried to God. This is the provision that you claimed God would never give you. This is the proof that God did not lead vou into the wilderness to die. but to live more fully, with a stronger faith on the way to the promised land.

At times, we may need a Moses to point out God's blessings; more often, we need to see them ourselves. We develop this ability by a faith that is actively supported though

a life of intentional Christian discipleship. Over time, by staying focused on Jesus in prayer, and by reading Scripture, our senses are sanctified and we grow in ability to perceive these blessings. In contrast, nurturing bitterness at suffering, reacting by calling into question God's love for you, or abandoning a life of faith in our Lord, blinds us to God's grace in the wilderness.

It is in the wilderness, and not the promised land, that faith grows and proves itself. Being told to have faith in the face of evil, pain, and suffering is not wishful thinking or passive acceptance of fate. It is a daily decision to remember God's mighty works in the past through trusting in his present daily provision, and allowing that trust to open our eyes to the grace he gives during that time.

### GRIEF IS THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE

THE REV. KEVIN MORRIS, RECTOR, THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NY

o see someone you love suffering in great pain and to be unable to make it go away, is, I think, one of the greatest agonies that we endure as humans. It is perhaps worse than actually suffering ourselves. Physical pain damages and wounds our bodies, but watching someone you love suffering goes deeper; that is emotional pain, that is pain that is born out of love, and it cuts right to the heart of you. Time and time again, I have witnessed people die; each time, no matter how much discomfort the dying person was in, it always seemed to pale in comparison to the pain being experienced by the loved ones gathered there. Thankfully we have an arsenal of medications that

can help alleviate the pain of those that are dying, but we have nothing, no pill or serum, that can ease the pain of grief.

When Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth was writing to console those who lost loved ones in the World Trade Center on September 11th 2001, she said "nothing that can be said can begin to take away the anguish and the pain of these moments. Grief is the price we pay for love." Nothing can be said to take away the pain of grief. I wish more people understood that. When I was a chaplain I would regularly walk into situations with people who were struggling with extreme grief, and so many times the rest of the staff would expect me to have the right words or the right prayers to make all the tears go away. Well, I am here to tell you that those prayers and those words do not exist.

Nothing I or anyone else can say or do is going to take away the existential pain of mothers who have just lost children or of partners who have just buried the loves of their lives. In fact, trying to address such deep pain with trite phrases or platitudes is likely just to cause more pain. When you experience pain that deep, usually the best thing you can do is just sit with it. Honor it. Hold that person and be with them. You won't be able to take their pain away, but you can make sure that they aren't suffering alone.

Most of the disciples could not stand by and watch their teacher and friend, a man whom they loved greatly, suffer. They ran off. They hid. Maybe they were afraid of getting arrested too, but I am sure they also couldn't bear the thought of watching someone they love die. At the end, the only ones standing by, present there at the foot

of his cross, were his mother. his aunt, Mary Magdelene, and the beloved disciple John. Where were the other eleven disicples? Where were the crowds of people he had fed, or preached to, or healed? All gone. Afraid to face the persecution, afraid to face the pain, afraid to look into the eyes of someone whose agony they could not relieve. Those that stood by Christ to the end were few, but they are the ones who probably loved him the most.

Maybe it is for this reason that the Church has traditionally looked to the Virgin Mary for inspiration on how to be a Christian. She was the first to hold him when he came into this world, and she was the last to hold him when he went out of it. Her ability to stand by Christ, even though it meant her own heart-shattering pain, was inspiration for generations of Christians

struggling with how to make sense of this thing we call the crucifixion. Her presence there at the foot of the cross meant the fulfillment of the words that the priest Simeon said to her when Iesus was born: "a sword will pierce your own soul too." And now it had happened. The centurion could have pierced her side with that lance and it would have hurt less. How can we learn to love Christ that deeply, so deeply that we would not look away or walk away from him in his agony? This is the question that Christians have had to ask themselves whenever we have walked the way of the cross: how can we approach the cross with Mary's love and faithfulness?

One of the responses to that question from the Middle Ages is a Latin hymn: the stabat mater dolorosa. We now associate this hymn with the Stations of the Cross, as its verses are frequently sung

between stations, and it is fitting, because these lyrics invite us to walk the way of the cross with Mary:

At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to her Son to the last.

Through her heart, His sorrow sharing, all His bitter anguish bearing, now at length the sword has passed.

O how sad and sore distressed was that Mother, highly blessed, of the sole-begotten One.

Christ above in torment hangs, she beneath beholds the pangs of her dying glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep, whelmed in miseries so deep, Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Can the human heart refrain from partaking in her pain, in that Mother's pain untold?

For the sins of His own nation, She saw Jesus wracked with torment, All with scourges rent:

She beheld her tender Child, Saw Him hang in desolation, Till His spirit forth He sent.

O thou Mother! fount of love! Touch my spirit from above, make my heart with thine accord:

Make me feel as thou hast felt; make my soul to glow and melt with the love of Christ my Lord.

Holy Mother! pierce me through, in my heart each wound renew of my Savior crucified:

Let me share with thee His pain, who for all my sins was slain, who for me in torments died.

GATHERING

Let me mingle tears with thee, mourning Him who mourned for me, all the days that I may live:

By the Cross with thee to stay, there with thee to weep and pray, is all I ask of thee to give.

Virgin of all virgins blest!, Listen to my fond request: let me share thy grief divine;

Let me, to my latest breath, in my body bear the death of that dying Son of thine.

Wounded with His every wound,
steep my soul till it hath swooned,
in His very Blood away;

Be to me, O Virgin, nigh, lest in flames I burn and die, in His awful Judgment Day.

Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence, be Thy Mother my defense, be Thy Cross my victory; While my body here decays, may my soul Thy goodness praise, Safe in Paradise with Thee.

Standing side-by-side with Mary at the foot of the cross, we realize that, while it is not always possible to take someone else's pain, it is possible to share their pain with them. It is possible to keep faith with them, to stand there steadfast and not allow them to suffer alone. It is possible, through love, to feel the pain that they feel — in fact, because of love, to feel it stronger and deeper. Mary cannot take away her child's pain or his death, but she cannot, she will not, let this child whom she loves die alone.

When you look at Mary at the foot of the cross, you begin to realize that this is exactly what Christ is doing on the cross for us. God, as a loving parent, is not going to let one of his children die alone. With

Christ's crucifixion, God forever knows our pain, whether it is the physical pain of being beaten or tortured, as so many are in our world today, or the emotional pain of watching someone you love die. With Christ's crucifixion, God knows that pain inside and out. God is present with us, crucified with us. In our death and in our suffering, we hang there on either side of him, just like one of those two thieves. Christ suffers with us when we suffer, just as Mary suffers with her son hanging there on the cross. When we walk the way of the cross, we honor that suffering, and we honor all of those who, through grief, pay the price for love. May we never consider it too high a price to pay for love, and may we always remember that grief is not the end of this story.

### PAIN, SUFFERING, And Death: God Doesn't Always Have a Plan.

THE REV. MICHAEL BERTRAND VICAR, ST PETER & ST PAUL EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MISSION, TX

n August of 1992, I was 14 years old and my fam-Lily lived in Thibodaux, Louisiana, about an hour southwest of New Orleans. (Yes, there is land south of New Orleans; it's a successful port partly because it's so far inland.) St. John's Episcopal Church was and is a historic and beautiful parish near downtown Thibodaux. My father served as junior warden of St. John's multiple times during the years that we lived there. As junior warden, he was responsible for overseeing the physical plant of the parish. He had keys to the church and the adjacent parish hall, and was over there at all hours of the day and night.

I don't remember if he was junior warden that year.

Regardless of his exact title, he went over to St. John's early on the morning of August 13, 1992. I don't remember why; it might have been that the lights were still on in the rector's office. We lived very close to St. John's in those days — not directly across the street, but close enough that you could walk there and back in a couple of minutes.

As I said before, I was 14. August 13 was a Thursday and school had not started yet. Like a typical teenager, I got up late. My father was waiting at the bottom of the stairs. It's been 23 years, and I have tried to let the day's memories fade. What I remember him saying is, "Mike, I have some bad news. Father Horgan is dead."

The Reverend Hunter H. Horgan came to St. John's in 1989. He supplied for us a few times,

and then we called him as rector. Father Horgan was very different from the previous rector. He was from the New Orleans area. His family did not relocate with him when he accepted the call. Teenage-me thought Fr. Horgan was funny and open. I could talk to him about anything. The idea of knowing and befriending a minister was something new to me. I heard whispers that Fr. Horgan had problems. He was divorced and remarried. He might have issues with alcohol. None of that mattered to me.

Father Horgan was beaten to death in his office sometime in the night. My father was one of the first on the scene. The Thibodaux Police Department did not arrest anyone. Rumors flew as anxious, hurting people tried to resolve their anxiety over his sudden, violent death.

Who beats a priest to death in his own office, in his own

church? Did he deserve it? Who did it? This last question was one I heard again and again. When I started school a few weeks later, I remember one treacher casually asking the class, "Y'all hear about that preacher that was killed? I was so scared those killers might be coming after me. I hid under my bed." And then she went on to laugh.

Who killed Father Horgan? No one knew, but everyone had a theory, though I won't detail them here. Many of them blamed him in some way, shape, or form. He angered someone. Wronged someone. His issues caused it.

I wasn't worried about the "who" question. I assumed God knew and He would settle the score in His own time. "Vengeance is mine, thus saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19) The bigger question to me was, "why?" Priests are God's chosen. His servants.

Somewhere along the line I'd received a dose of Calvinism, specifically a belief in double predestination, and I asked, "Why did God kill Father Horgan?"

There was no answer. It would be many years before I learned more about Father Horgan's life. But within three and a half years I drifted away from religion altogether. There were no answers. There was no point. It was all mass delusion, an opiate for the masses, a crutch for the weak minded. I would be away from religion until my final year of college. That doesn't mean I stopped asking questions or caring about God.

The standard answers in the face of tragedy were meaningless to me. "It's all part of His plan," or "He called them home," or even, "It all going to be okay," were a dirty bandaid on the top of a festering wound. No one would ac-

knowledge the deep hurt and do the hard work of cleaning it all out, most of all not me.

I wish I had read the book of Job back then. If you recall, Job encountered tremendous suffering. He lost his family, his possessions, and even his health, for no apparent reason. There's a passage in the second chapter, where Job is sitting in ashes, scraping himself with a potsherd, and his wife comes to him and says, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die."

Job answers, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

I want this read at my funeral. Job's answer connects with a non-Scriptural work that has been very important for me in recent years. "Was there a man dismay'd? / Not tho'

the soldier knew /Someone had blunder'd: / Theirs not to make reply, / Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die." (Tennyson, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, ln. 10-15)

Tennyson is writing of one of the great military mistakes of history. 600 horse mounted soldiers, armed only with lances (think, spears), are sent against a heavily fortified artillery (think, big guns) with clear lines of fire. As you can imagine, the Light Brigade was massacred.

The Light Brigade were presented with orders they didn't understand, but they obeyed. Job, likewise, is presented with a reality he doesn't comprehend. In that second verse, he simply acknowledges it and lives.

I didn't need to know who killed Fr. Horgan. A few years ago they found his murderer, but he was already serving a life sentence for other offences. Punishing the murder does not restore balance. I will not see Fr. Horgan again in this life.

I am now a priest in Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. How I got here is another story. I have seen more suffering over the years: vicariously through the lives of my parishioners; personally through Hurricane Katrina, the death of my mother-in-law, and the lived experience of parish ministry in the Episcopal Church. I don't need to know who. I don't even need to know why.

Suffering and death happen. They don't always serve a purpose or a plan. They just are. Understanding doesn't always lessen the pain. If God told you the plan and you didn't like it, then what would you do?

My response, and what I call my parishes to do, is to be

faithful in the midst of it all. It hurts. It isn't fair. God is with us through it all. Remember that the Father sent His Son to us, and that we mocked, tortured, and killed Him. Father and Son suffered. God didn't take the easy way out. If we follow Jesus, we're going to suffer. If we live we're going to suffer. But that's not all. Suffering and death don't win. Our place, today, is to accept what's in front of us. If that means joy, then be joyful. If that means suffering, then suffer. Don't explain it away. Don't avoid it. Look at Job's example. Listen to Tennyson. Follow Iesus.

When pain is to be borne, a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all.

— C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain

#### A LUCKY BREAK

[reprinted from the Michaelmas 1985 TAD]

The Rev. John Borrego Guthrie, OK

ver since my senior Liturgics course in semlinary, I have been extremely meticulous about how the Holy Eucharist should be celebrated. (The more blunt-spoken of my parishioners might substitute "pompous and nitpicking" for "meticulous".) It is true that I have an unfortunate habit of staring laser beams through a giggling acolyte, or raising my eyes heavenward and heaving a martyred sigh at a layreader's absent-mindedness. "If you're going to do the thing at all," I tell myself, "do it right." I like to give God the best I can offer him when I preside at His Table, and I give a good deal of thought and care to every motion and gesture. At its best, the liturgy is a graceful, stately dance before the Lord of Glory, with priest and people rejoicing in his love.

A moment of clumsiness on November 7,1984, changed everything I brought to the leadership of the Holy Eucharist. An unseen chair sent me into a vaudeville pratfall Harold Lloyd would have been proud of. The doctor's diagnosis escalated over several days from "severe wrist sprain" to "cracked radius" to "fracture of the navicular". The pebble-sized navicular lies at the base of the thumb, where a Regency dandy would place a pinch of snuff. I found myself sporting a plaster cast on my right arm that went from knuckles almost to the elbow. with the thumb in an awkward hitchhiker's signal.

All the care and precision I had so proudly brought to the outward signs of the liturgy suddenly vanished. Each celebration of the Eucharist

became a comedy of spilled wine, fumbled chalices, and dropped purificators. The Great Cross, traced in the air in absolution and blessing, was a clumsy wave. The central act of the drama, the Breaking of the Bread, was done with a Host on the table top, grasped between index and middle fingers.

I was exasperated with God. Why had he treated me, his servant, this way? Why had he made me so clumsy and self-conscious about the one thing that meant the most to me as his priest?

Slowly, his answer came. Like a stage set coming out of the darkness as the lights are turned up, the wider dimension of the liturgy began to become clear to me. I had to ask for more help from altar guild, acolytes, and chalice bearers. At first, this enforced helplessness galled me. Then I began to see it as a kind of liv-

ing metaphor for the offering made by the whole people of God. Priest and people are all joined in the great Sacrifice, each contributing a part of the action, just as each grain of wheat is a part of the bread.

With my hands idle, I began to be more aware of the words of the liturgy. As the weeks of the Church year revolved from the post-Pentecost season to the Epiphanytide, one Prayer of Consecation followed another. The phrases became facets of a jewel, each giving its own view of the inner light of the great Mystery of Christ's presence: "... You did not abandon us to the power of death ... not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offenses ... in these last days you sent him to be incarnate ... sanctify us, also ... a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice ... we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters ... All honor and

glory are yours, Almighty Father ..."

I became more and more conscious of the precious gift of my priesthood, and the joy and privilege of gathering in the Church's prayer the gladness and sorrow, the wholeness and brokenness of all the brothers and sisters of Jesus called to Messiah's feast.

The externals of the liturgy matter only insofar as they make us more aware of the Mystery at the heart of the Eucharist - the loving, healing touch of the Risen Christ. In the past few weeks, I have offered the sacrifice of the Eucharist vested in white silk and cloth of gold, surrounded by the majesty of Vivaldi's Gloria in Excelcis. I have also shared the presence of Christ in a crowded hospital room with the soap-opera babble of the television set for background music and a cluttered formica tabletop for altar. You

were with us at both times, and at all times, brother Jesus.

When I got my A in seminary Liturgics, I knew everything there was to know about the Eucharist. God has used the inconvenience of a cracked bone and a plaster cast to open my eyes to the eternal, unfolding Mystery of his presence.

The Carmelite Father Noel Dermot O'Donoghue has said it best in *The Holy Mountain*:

The center (of the Eucharist), or rather the vital energy that fills the sanctuary, is the prayer of Christ and the presence of Christ in that prayer. This presence is as real, as substantial, as the prayer is real and substantial. The young priest has not as yet attained to the dimensions of this prayer any more than Peter had on Thabor or in Gethsemane. But he has, however,

tremblingly, even foolishly, responded to this call to pray with Christ, and here he is most fully involved in this prayer. He does not at all realize that he is as yet a babe in arms, that he is being carried by the prayer of Christ and the Church, perhaps even by the prayer of some of those who are his flock. As times goes on he will learn all this, and will come to admire the courage of Peter even when he could but tough the fringes of the mystery. So his making is an unmaking, his knowing is an unknowing, and his breaking of the bread more and more a breaking of himself, so that he too may follow his Master into the glory of Resurrection.

The cast finally came off on January 21. Now the Lord once again has my hands when I come to His Table. He also has much more of my heart.

Sometimes people feel that they have a right to be happy in this world. A Christian is not to be necessarily happy but is to work toward blessedness. In the Sermon on the Mount, those blessed ones were full of joy but not necessarily happy. Blessedness is a religious conception and joyfulness is our response to God. Strictly speaking, in our human relationships we may be 'happy' but not joyful. If we are hungry because we have given our food to someone less fortunate, we are not happy but we may be blessed and joyful.

— A parish priest, quoted in the Summer 1971 issue

God whispers in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It is his megaphone in a deaf world.

— C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain

### **DEATHS**

THE RT. REV. DONALD JAMES PARSONS, 93, in Pekin, IL

He earned a Th.B., a Th.M., and a Th.D. in New Testament from Philadelphia Divinity School, and was ordained as a deacon, and later a priest, in 1946. He served parishes in Philadelphia, PA, and Wilmington and Smyrna, DE, before becoming a professor of New Testament and Ascetical Theology at Nashotah House Theological Seminary. He later became the 13th dean of Nashotah House, before being elected bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Quincy in 1973.

THE REV. DR. RICHARD CORNISH MARTIN, 78, in Raleigh, NC

He received his M.Div. from the Virginia Theological Seminary, and D.Min. from the Howard University School of Divinity, was ordained to the diaconate in 1961 and the priesthood in 1962. During his long career, he served parishes in State College and Pittsburgh, PA, Washington, DC, Boston, MA, Charleston, SC, New York, NY, and Raleigh, NC.

THE REV. CANON GEORGE JOHNSON TOMPKINS, III, 64, in Glasgow, VA

He received an M.A. in Religion from Yale Divinity School, an M.Div. from General Theological Seminary, and a D.Min. from the School of Theology at the University of the South, Sewanee. He was ordained a deacon in 1976 and a priest in 1977. He served parishes in Windsor, NC, Williamsburg, VA, New London, CT, and Charleston, SC.

#### THE REV. HERBERT STEPHENSON WENTZ, 80, in Sewanee, TN

A graduate of General Theological Seminary, the University of Oxford, and the University of Exeter, he was ordained deacon and priest in 1960, and served parishes in Georgia and North Carolina before transitioning to academia, eventually being named professor emeritus of religion in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of the South, Sewanee, where he taught generations of students the intricacies of the King James Version of the Rible

### THE REV. EMERY WASHINGTON, 80, in St. Louis, MO

A graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, he was a teacher, a headmaster, a community organizer, and a priest, ordained in 1962. In his native Arkansas, he led the integration of the diocese's Camp

Mitchell, and was the first African-American to serve on the Arkansas State Board of Education. He was a lifelong advocate for peace and justice, and served parishes in Missouri.

#### THE REV. GEORGE THOMSON HEMINGWAY, 75, in Nehalem, OR

After a 30-year career as an oceanographer, he went on to earn degrees from the Episcopal Theological School of Claremont and George Fox Evangelical Seminary. He spent several years serving multiple Hispanic congregations in the San Diego Diocese, before being named Canon Missioner for San Diego, and later for the Diocese of Oregon.

### THE REV. WILLIAM J. BARNDS, 84, in Galesburg, IL

A graduate of General Theological Seminary, he was ordained a deacon in 1956, and a priest in 1957. He served

GATHERING

parishes in Illinois, Nebraska, and New York.

### THE REV. RALPH T. DURGIN, 87, in Braintree, MA

A graduate of Mercer School of Theology, he was ordained a deacon, and then a priest, in 1972. He served parishes in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Maine.

## THE REV. CANON WINIFRED B. GAINES, 87, In Sacramento, CA

A graduate of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, she was the first woman ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of Northern California, in 1980. She spent ten years as a hospital and hospice chaplain before becoming a canon of Trinity Cathedral, Sacramento.

### THE REV. JAMES F. MITCHELL, III, 83, in San Antonio, TX

A graduate of the Seminary of the Southwest, he was or-

dained a deacon in 1973 and a priest in 1974. He served parishes in Rockdale, Beaumont, and San Antonio, TX.

# THE REV. RHODA SWANNER MONTGOMERY, 53, in College Station, TX

A graduate of the Seminary of the Southwest, she was ordained deacon in 2001 and priest in 2002. She served parishes in Texas.

### THE REV. MARY LOU REYNOLDS, 79, in Denver, CO

A graduate of the Seminary of the Southwest, she was ordained deacon and priest in 1995, and served parishes in Nebraska.

## THE REV. JOHN WALTER RIDDLE THOMAS, 86, in Richmond, VA

A graduate of the Philadelphia Divinity School, he was ordained deacon in 1960, and priest in 1961. He served parishes in Hawaii, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

THE REV. HARRY BREARLEY WHITLEY, 94, on Cape Cod, MA

A graduate of General Theological Seminary, he was ordained deacon and priest in 1945. He served parishes in Puerto Rico, Nebraska, Illinois, Michigan, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

THE REV. JAE WOOK CHUNG, 42, in Long Island, NY

A graduate of General Theological Seminary, he immigrated to the US from South Korea at the age of 27. He was ordained a deacon and priest in 2014. He served at St. Ann's, Sayville, NY, in the Diocese of Long Island.

THE REV. PHILIP B.
ROULETTE, 75, in Rodgers
Forge, MD

He studied at Virginia Theo-

logical Seminary and was ordained a priest in 1967. He served parishes in North Baltimore, Linthicum, and Glyndon, MD, the last for 29 years.

THE REV. C. EDWARD REEVES, JR., 89, in Memphis, TN

A graduate of Candler School of Theology, he served as a Methodist minister for 10 years, then studied at the School of Theology at the University of the South, in Sewanee, before being ordained an Episcopal priest. He served parishes in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee.

THE REV. DR. LAWRENCE ANDREW ADOLPH LARSON, 81, in Danbury, CT

Originally a Methodist minister, he was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1968. He served parishes in Connecticut and New York.

#### THE REV. DR. E. GENE BENNETT, 74, in Brookhaven, MS

A graduate of the School of Theology at the University of the South, Sewanee, he served parishes in Mississippi, Arizona, and California.

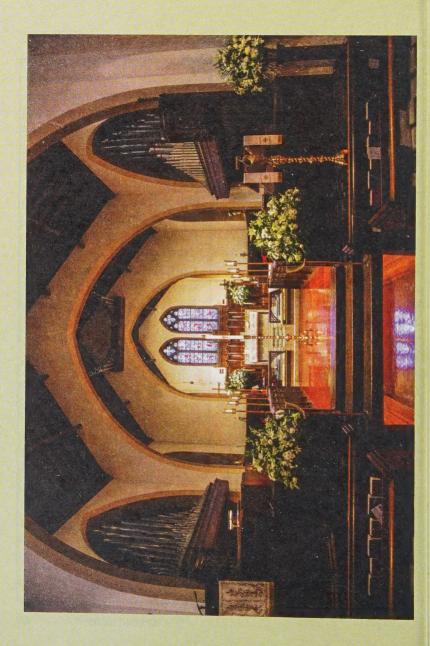
#### THE REVEREND CANON DOMENIC CIANNELLA, 94, in Media, PA

A graduate of both the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Theology at the University of the South, Sewanee, he was ordained in 1945. He served parishes in New York, Ohio, and Wales.

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

Prayer is communication with God. Good communication needs practice to make it good - one seldom does well what one seldom does. A check list will help us keep our prayers in balance: forgiveness, intercession, thanksgiving, love, petition. God communicated with us at all levels of life. He is with us in joy and in suffering. The refusal to suffer can destroy us: there can be no crown without a cross. We are to witness Christ crucified and that entails suffering. We are not to deny in the darkness what we have seen in the light. We are with Christ and He is with us to the end, and death is really Easter.

 The Rt. Rev. Christoph Keller, Jr., tenth bishop of Arkansas



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